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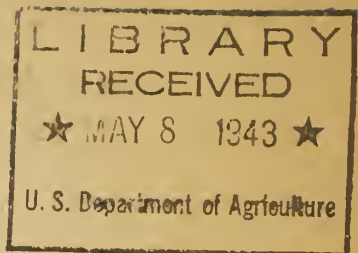
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
U. S. AGRICULTURAL MARKETING ADMINISTRATION
DALLAS, TEXAS

TEXAS' PART IN WARTIME FOOD DISTRIBUTION

Talk by L. J. Cappleman, Regional
Administrator, AMA, before County
Judges and Commissioners Convention,
Mineral Wells, Texas, November 4,
1942.



Before the fall of Bataan one of the most tragic messages our War Department received was a sentence containing only six words -- six tragic words -- "Lack of food proved our undoing". We all know how bravely our men fought on Bataan and Corregidor. History will laud their efforts. History --- written with American blood. Never again must we allow a repetition of a similar message -- by any force fighting for the United Nations.

America is the bread basket of the United Nations. Our nation's wartime food supply is a subject of vital concern to every man, woman and child in the United States. It is of vital concern to all of the United Nations including civilian population as well as the armed forces. Food to them, as well as to us, means life or death. On the strength of food wars are won --- and with God's help food will also help us write the peace.

Production of food is the first big job. And we all know the splendid way in which the farmers of Texas and the farmers of the nation have responded to the call of increased production. In spite of the fact that farmers are faced with labor shortages, lack of machinery, lack of

transportation facilities - - - in spite of all these and many other handicaps - farmers have forged ahead in 1942 and produced the greatest yield of farm products in our history. Recently a group of small town business men in Tylertown, Mississippi invited Secretary of Agriculture, Claude R. Wickard, to participate in a Thanksgiving Harvest Observance Program. An observance where business and professional men joined with the farmers of the community and thanked providence for their bountiful wartime harvest.

We should all indeed be thankful for this abundant harvest. Next year we may not be so fortunate. We all are acquainted with the many hazards of farming - - now farmers must bear not only the usual hazards but they are also faced with increased production difficulties that might cause a smaller yield in 1943. On the other hand, our food needs will increase. Therefore, every ounce of food produced this year must be made to count in our total battle for existence. None of it can be allowed to go to waste.

The distribution of our food supply to our armed forces - to the armed forces of the United Nations - to our people at home - and the civilian population of the United Nations constitutes a tremendous job.

We know pretty well in advance, the needs of our armed forces. A fair estimate also can be made of food needs at home. But, with all the sudden and unforeseen changes of a world at war, we cannot know far in advance, the needs of our allies abroad. We must estimate to the best of our ability, total requirements -- then ask farmers to produce enough food to meet these needs. We dare not underestimate the requirements. To do so would be tragic. Consequently most of the food needs are estimated a little high to allow for uncertain growing conditions, and other unpredictable factors. This is a most necessary, precautionary measure.

When production estimates are set a little high to allow for adverse growing conditions and we have an unusually favorable season, farmers are almost sure to produce supplies of certain commodities far in excess of actual demand. Needs of the armed forces and Lend-Lease are met and remaining supplies are still far in excess of amounts the ordinary consumer markets will absorb. When this condition exists, the excess must be taken off the market, else farmer prices would drop to a dangerous low. In fact, prices would probably drop low enough to endanger production if such excesses were not taken off the market.

There are other factors - aside from uncertain growing conditions - which would have a very decided effect on farm prices if they were not controlled. As pointed out before, wartime demands for food vary greatly. Shipping space may become tight, food catches of our armed forces or our allies may be destroyed, or a thousand other unforeseen factors may enter into the picture. From the total supply there may be a call for great amounts of one commodity and relatively few calls for another.

Let us assume - just for example - that our armed forces and our allies estimate they will need 25% of our production of pork and 25% of our production of dried eggs next year. We ask farmers to increase their production of the two commodities by more than one-fourth next year. In the meantime more shipping space becomes available. Our armed forces and our allies accumulate a fair supply of highly concentrated, dried eggs, but the need for pork products increases. By next spring the eggs may have been produced and dried ready for shipment. The specified amount of pork may have been produced. But, by that time they may be in dire need of twice the amount of pork they originally estimated, while they may only need half the amount of dried eggs they originally requested.

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The needs of our armed forces must be met. We must share our food with our allies who have been fighting off the enemy while we prepared for war. These needs will be met. The extra pork produced for this purpose will be furnished and we will supply an equal portion from the pork produced for home consumption. A shortage of pork for domestic consumption will be the result.

At the same time we will have on our hands a large amount of dried eggs, over and above ordinary domestic demands. If this large amount of eggs were turned loose on the market, prices would drop. In fact prices would probably drop to a point far below the cost of production. In the face of all the other production difficulties, farmers simply could not continue to produce at a loss. Production must be kept up because in a month -- or two months -- the need for dried eggs might increase many times and the need might very well be next to imperative.

Eliminating the advisability of dumping them on an already saturated market, there are two possibilities remaining for disposal of the over-abundance of eggs we would have on hand. They could be allowed to deteriorate or they could be used to build health and strength on the home front. This nourishing food could be allowed to go to waste or it could be used to feed undernourished American school children, and the old, the halt, the lame and the blind. And, we do have about eight million such people in the United States today, who are physically unfit for any type of employment, plus approximately 9 million undernourished school children.

Let me remind you that in the example I have given you, I have chosen two commodities arbitrarily to show you what could happen in the case of any commodity. In other words, because of shortages of certain foods and an over-abundance of other foods, we will have rationing on the one hand and

so-called "surpluses" on the other. As long as this war lasts there will be a tight squeeze on many products and at the same time there will be an over-abundance of many others.

There are many examples I could cite you of seasonal, local and temporary market gluts which have occurred and are now occurring. For example, the apple growers of the nation are hard hit by the war because their export market is closed. In order to avoid a serious market glut the Department of Agriculture has already purchased around 2 million bushels of apples this year.

Texans are familiar with the aid AMA has given Texas farm producers. When serious market gluts occurred for sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, tomatoes, grapefruit, grapefruit juice, AMA stepped in purchased the over-supply and stabilized the farmer's prices. Part of this food was used for Lend-Lease and some of it was absorbed by the school lunch and direct distribution programs.

Thus, the distribution programs dovetail with the 5 million dollar a day Lend-Lease food purchase program to meet the food demands of war abroad and the requirements of all groups at home. I would like to explain some of these distribution programs very briefly.

Last year some 6 million school children throughout the nation received wholesome noonday lunches through Community School Lunch Programs in around 93,000 schools. Statistics show that there are over 9 million undernourished American school children.

Out of the national total of children receiving lunches last year, some 6% or around 369,000 were Texas school children. This is an accomplishment of which Texas may rightly be proud. There could be no effort more commendable than helping to wipe out the evil of malnutrition. What would

be the point in fighting to preserve democracy in America if we did not preserve the citizens of tomorrow. What would be the point in fighting to preserve our country if we were going to turn it over to a citizenry so weak -- both mentally and physically -- from undernourishment in childhood, that they could not protect it. Fortunately, the future citizens are being protected as well as the country.

The Community School Lunch Program is just what the name implies. It is a community enterprise. School officials, other local and county officials, parent-teacher associations and other civic minded groups and individuals all work together to make the program a success. Local sponsors of the program cooperate to furnish the labor, the equipment and supplemental foods for the lunches. The Agricultural Marketing Administration furnishes the basic foods.

In many Texas counties a direct distribution program is operating in conjunction with the School Lunch Program. Under the Direct Distribution Program, foods purchased by the Agricultural Marketing Administration to help avert market gluts, are distributed to needy unemployables. The Agricultural Marketing Administration outlines the requirements for eligibility of unemployables to receive this food. It is a responsibility of the state and local welfare agency to certify that the eligibles meet these requirements. The welfare agency also distributes the food.

At this point let me say as far back as April I wrote to all Directors of the State Departments of Public Welfare in this region and told them the AMA would approve the immediate cancellation of any able-bodied person receiving benefits from AMA Distribution programs and refusing to accept employment.

As you know, some Texas counties have the Food Stamp Program instead of Direct Distribution. The same group of underprivileged -- the aged, the lame, the halt and the blind -- are eligible to take part in this program. Eligibles purchase orange food stamps which may be exchanged for any food. They are then issued blue food stamps which are good only for the purchase of commodities in local or seasonal abundance. Additional foods for which the farmers are in need of a ready market, thus go to build up the health, strength and morale of unfortunate unemployables.

During the past few months food prices have gone up and up. Relief grants, as you know, have remained pretty much the same or have been decreased. As prices rise and relief grants become relatively smaller and smaller, the Food Stamp Program becomes more and more important from a standpoint of health defense. It becomes more and more an assurance that unemployables will get their share of the total food supply.

The School Milk Program is relatively new. Like the School Lunch Program, it is a community enterprise. Local sponsors must assume responsibility for serving the milk and for the cost of processing. Often the sponsors charge the children up to a penny a half pint to help pay these costs. The Agricultural Marketing Administration pays the farmer's price for the milk.

There are millions of youngsters who do not drink enough milk. It is one of the most vital foods a child can take, yet a surprisingly large number of them do not drink any milk. This is bad for the children and for the dairy farmer as well. The dairy farmer needs this market in order to expand his production as it must be expanded to meet war time needs.

At present the School Milk Program is limited to areas of under 10,000 population and to areas where there is not a definite shortage of milk. Even though we are limiting the School Milk Program to areas where there is not a shortage of milk, I'm not personally convinced that it is a good idea to limit the program at all. If your family was short on milk, you certainly wouldn't take what you did have away from the children.

Another program of the Agricultural Marketing Administration which helps prevent waste of vital foods, is the Victory Food Special program. This program calls the consumer's attention to foods which are abundant. By encouraging full use of these abundant foods, waste is prevented and the pressure is taken off of other vital foods -- needed to fill the orders from our fighting forces. In short, the program encourages consumers to help make every ounce of vital food count the most in our battle for existence.

Foods which are abundant are designated as Victory Food Specials on a nation-wide and region-wide basis. Radio food commentators and announcers, newspapers, nutritionists and others call the Victory Food Special to the attention of consumers as a guide to wise wartime buying.

You have all been asked to help out with the School Lunch and School Milk Programs -- the Food Stamp and Direct Distribution Programs. Your response has been splendid. I want to thank you personally and to express the appreciation of the United States Department of Agriculture for your able assistance.

Recently a few of you gentlemen have become convinced that the distribution of agricultural commodities are a detriment to your community. And a few have seen fit to vote for the discontinuance of this program. I have felt that this was partly due to a misunderstanding --- a misunderstanding because all the facts concerning Direct Distribution had not been

called to your attention. The fact that Direct Distribution is directly coupled with our over-all food supply program. Let me say that I agree with you that able-bodied men who refuse work when our country is fighting a battle of life and death should not be allowed to continue to receive benefits of any federal program. However, I do not mean to say that the halt, the blind, the under-privileged and the worker who is receiving a sub-normal income should not continue to receive the benefits of the various food distribution programs.

The primary charge which has been made against distribution programs is that they are responsible for the present farm labor shortage. I personally do not agree that the distribution programs have been responsible for farm labor shortages. We are now passing through the peak of the greatest harvest season in our agricultural history. Thousands of young Texas farm boys have voluntarily left the farms to join the armed forces. Countless others have left the farms for higher pay in war industry factories. At the same time the need for farm labor has been greater than ever before in our history because of the increased production. That, in my opinion, is the reason for present farm labor shortages.

It is hard for me to believe that any unemployed person who is able to work would refuse a job because he received 96¢ worth of food during September. That is the exact amount of the size of the September food grant in Texas.

The Commodity distribution program and the Community School Lunch Program is a give and take proposition. Every farmer in Texas is dependent upon how his fellow farmers in the other 47 states make out. When purchases are made of Texas products they are shipped to surrounding states for redistribution in order to maintain the price Texas farmers receive for the commodity they have labored to raise. At the same time a commodity

grown in Iowa, Kansas or Colorado may be shipped to Texas for distribution in order to maintain the farmers' price in those states.

The various food programs administered by the Department of Agriculture have a dual purpose. First - and foremost, to encourage the continued production of food so necessary to the successful prosecution of the war; and second, to keep on building, strengthening our home front so that fellow Americans, regardless of class, color or creed, are able to obtain sufficient nutritive food so they will be able to shoulder their individual responsibilities in this life and death struggle.

Let us never again hear the words "Lack of food proved our undoing" - - or see our American boys and girls and underprivileged families suffering from starvation in our very midst.

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